

AMERICAN ILLUSTRATORS MAKE WILD PLUNGE INTO FARCE

They Burst Upon the Stage with Skits Called "Plague o' My Art" and "Perfectly Happy."

To celebrate the decay of the Society of American Illustrators into the International Art Foundry, Inc., and thanks to the natural genius of Robert J. Wildhack, one of the most dashing of the younger school, the artists of the former body held a barbecue in many colors. Looking forward with second sight to the not far distant day when art will be turned out by machinery at the throwing of a lever, when nudes will be created at the push of a button and ultramarine and can-boge sunsets will be squirted on to canvas with a hose, they wrote and produced last week two skittish satires in pantomime in which the artists of the future go to work with dinner pails on their arms and ring in on the time clock at the shriek of the factory whistle.

It was a brilliant gathering. The creators of the color of the world were there in a body. Those that do the magazine covers of the civilized nations, the posters, futuristic females, hospital frescoes, barnstorms in purple, snowstorms in green, tone poems in cadmium and symphonies in magenta and burnt umber, stood with foaming flagons lifted high, modelling for the author.

"PLAGUE O' MY ART" AND "PERFECTLY HAPPY."

There were three authors, however, Robert J. Wildhack, C. B. Falls and Fred E. Dayton. It took at least that number to perpetrate the two plays, "Plague o' My Art" and "Perfectly Happy," a delicately phantasmagoric little squib in which a sultan, returning to his flat, discovers three hunchbacks, friends of his wife, tucked snugly away in wardrobes and bureau drawers, where he executes them by smothering. The authors did not come forward right away after this, as they mistrusted the intentions of the audience. They did not know whether the burlesque nudes that flashed beneath the limelight were nice September Morns or naughty Arabian Eves tempting St. Anthony to swoop upon them and carry them off to headquarters. They did not know if the roars that greeted the chorus of models were the passion cries of primitive cave artists or the approving applause of moonstruck modernists. In short, they only knew that they had written the two dramas and were afraid.

They need not have been. Their writings scored a hit. The acting of Martin Justice as Fatima, the artist's wife, alone would have promised that. C. Allan Gilbert, under the name of Pall Mall Mecca—all the characters were named after cigarettes—scored a brilliant success by the manipulation of his "laughing stomach," the sensation of the evening. Upon his stomach was painted a face, which with due manipulation smiled engagingly.

PALL MALL MECCA, A DANGEROUS MAN.

Corpulent and in a make-up suggesting the appearance of Anthony Comstock, with side whiskers and fake thousand dollar bills sticking out of his pocket and a steamship ticket to the South Sea Islands in his gummied and bediamonded hand, Pall Mall Mecca sought to win the heart of the fair Fatima, who was compelled to sing in cabarets to support her worthless husband, who had ideals about Art. Fatima did not like hard work and wished



LEJAREN A. HILLER AS LORD SALISBURY: SKETCHED BY HIMSELF.

the rent was paid. She preferred to sing in cabarets, and the wiles of Pall Mall Mecca almost had her. But Fatima had Spartan ideals. She never could enjoy wealth, she said, that was the fruit of the baseness of publishers. She loved her husband, Philip Morris, who was clever, even if he did spoil canvas by



THE WAY C. D. FALLS SAW HIMSELF AS THE HUNCHBACK KING.



E. M. ASHE, THE HUSBAND and MARTIN JUSTICE, THE WIFE, IN THE STUDIO SCENE.

THE MIRROR HOLDER.

GEO. KERR, CHORUS LADY

HOW SOME OF THEM LOOKED TO WEED.

As Venus delving the storm:
Pencil my charms in a hero's arms:
Let me be the maid who's in wrong—
As you couple your name to Bob Chambers' shame,
Let me be the girl who's "not strong."
The audience was the most interesting



THE PRINCESS HOYO DE MONTE-REY, NEE ROBERT J. WILDHACK, SKETCHED BY MR. WILDHACK.

portion of the whole entertainment. It always is when it has Temperament. And members of the audience told us so. They were out for publicity, they said, and wanted all they could get.

Among the stars that gathered to witness the performance were Charles Dana Gibson, the president of the society; James Montgomery Flagg, Henry G. Fleming, F. Hopkinson Smith, Harrison Fisher, Owen Johnson, Charles Norris, often, almost always, referred to as the sporting editor of "The Christian Herald," H. H. McClure, Rae Brown and Cosgrave, Crowninshield and Chapin, many others also—Howard Chandler Christy, for example.

WILDHACK WAS THE CHIEF INVESTIGATOR.

The two plays were cleverly conceived and well performed. Wildhack, who has also been christened the "Looney Baroque," toiled night and day on his production, acting his part, encouraging the others and securing the services of the American Biograph Company for nothing. E. M. Ashe, who took the role of Philip Morris, the artist, was not only a great actor, but a movie star as well, and when shipwrecked in the salt South Seas distinguished himself at swimming the wooden ocean, where he vanquished sharks and swordfish with a paint brush.

Great, too, was the acting of the tree fly that stung him. Made out of a carrot and two turkey wings, it flapped down like a buzzard at the psychological moment, and a word must be said about the quartette of laughing stomachs in act three. On them were painted faces which, with due manipulation, in mixed engagingly. The stomach quartette was winning and winsome, if improper.

But the crowning stage feature of the entertainment was the art machine in the second act, invented by C. D. Williams, that turns out illustrations mechanically. Novels and short stories are read into a funnel that carries the sound to the inner machinery, where literature is transformed into art.

An artist takes his seat before a machine which looks like a barrel organ. Bells ring and levers whirl as he gets everything ready for the production of a masterpiece. A walking beam oscillates while the picture is being "read" and a taxicab flag marked "O. K." springs into position on the starboard side of the keyboard when the picture itself is finished.

EVERY LITERARY SITUATION POSITIVELY FITTED.

The contrivance works like a linotype machine, and is best adapted to the conventional shop-girl novel manuscript that has become endeared to the hearts of lady gum chewers throughout the land and to publishers and authors on account of the fertility of the gate receipts. The model on which they are made fits all the literary situations in the world, and was patterned from the original drawings of the rubber stamp artists, Gibson, Fisher and Christy. The old drawings are the only ones in existence, as the artists of the year 2014 know barely enough to operate the levers. But to resume.

Taking his place in front of the machine the reader begins in an appealing voice, with a preliminary invocation to the shade of Robert W. Chambers: "They

were in their outing flannels. The water sped by the bow of the canoe, rippling the lily pads on its way to the dark ocean. She played idly with the shimmering flow, sipping her dainty hand about in the water with the grace of a mischievous child."

"His deft muscular waist twisted and swung the canoe about the winding channel of the glorious stream."

"How glorious he is!" she thought.

"What a meal ticket he will be when I set him to work! My own!" she whispered, her eyes dewy with longing. "How wonderful that we are together in spite of all the scheming and lying of that villain!"

"How sweet to think in spite of all his deviltry we can float thus in the glorious sunshine and—ah—"

CHOICE MORSELS IN APPROVED MODERN STYLE.

"Love," he said, smiling down at her as she stumbled.

"Her lids fluttered and drooped, her cheeks so crimsoned that their sweet fire burned her eyes."

"He crushed her to him. 'Kiss me, my queen, my own!' His voice came gaspingly."

"I've starved for the feel of you; hungered for your voice, your lips, your wonderful lips."

"She pressed to him, cooling, sighing, murmuring."

"Dear, dear, dear," she could scarce talk.

"She strove to drive him away and draw him to her in the same breath. Her arms wrapped his beautiful head and drew it into her bosom. Slowly, tensely her glorious body straightened. Her wonderful white arms rigidly outstretched, every fibre of her quivering with burning desire, unrestrained desire."

"Oh, you do much so elegant!" she sighed.

"Into the sweet sanctity of her bosom his head nestled still more close, and with a moan of pleasure he lit his pipe."

At this the work begins. The artist at the keyboard pushes a lever and turns a crank. There is a tremendous oscillation of the walking beam, a whirling of cog wheels, a flash of wireless sparks, the taxicab flag marked "O. K." springs into position, and with a whistle of compressed air the completed picture is produced—a handsome young man in evening clothes smoking a cigarette and leaning over the piano with a vase of roses on it to embrace the Girl, who is seated at the keyboard.

A HIGHLY CYNICAL PLOT, DRIPPING WITH WIT.

But the satire against the modern age is not confined to the art machine. The plot itself is highly cynical and fairly drips with wit. E. M. Ashe, as Philip Morris, the Rip Van Winkle of the artist tribe, when driven to do "illustrations" for base money, the plague of his art, succumbs to the indiscreet eating of mangoes and blue bananas and falls into deep slumber under a male palm tree. His sleep is augmented by the bite of a tree-tse fly, and it lasts for a hundred years. Waking, he is rescued by an airship, Zimmerman's Best, and finds himself in the twenty-first century. Returning to civilization, he finds Art in the possession of the Hearst trust and all pictures turned out by the machine described above. The only familiar thing in the whole world is one of his own pictures that he stole by painting.



HARRY GRANT DART'S CONCEPTION OF HARRY GRANT DART AS LITTLE JACK ROSE.

Characters Include a Sultan, Anthony Comstock, J. d. Rose, a Tse-Tse Fly and an Airship.

laurels and placing him on a pedestal where he stands until his knees give out. This is the best way to dispose of them, they think, for since the great Woman War there have been no artists, no original works, and weariness, next to wanting for the Art Trust, is the greatest drain on creative originality. Finally Philip becomes so weary that he consents to do pictures for a new Heaven, called "The Proud Flesh," and the damns him forever.

PROPHETIC COSTUMES, DESIGNED BY ARTISTS.

They lamented, however, the difficulty of getting silk stockings high enough to fit them, and enlisted the services of their wives into the hunt. Some of them wore spangles over pink tights. Some wore harem trousers and the loveliest lingerie. There was one real model in their midst, however, and a pretty one—Miss Kay Laurell, who took the part of the "delicately phantasmagoric queen" in Mr. Falls' production. Miss Laurell showed great charm in her acting. She was highly applauded by the 40 assembled gentlemen.

The music, composed by the gifted harpist, Mr. John T. McIlver, who, by the way figures every year in the daily press as being no relation to "Terry the Pug," was more than worthy of his name, for it certainly had the punch, particularly adapted to each portion of the play and to each character, gladsome motifs being injected not only when the effie girl in spangles trips across the frondy with a cuspoid in her hand, but when Mogul, the salesman for the art of the civilized world, returns from Moscow with orders for 34,000 feet of decoration for a church, 52 barns, 500 "Westerns," 42 "societies" and several million "Gruers."

THE SWAYING DANCE OF THE FATHEADS.

The "dance of the fat heads," in which Mr. George Kerr's costume was particularly fetching and very striking. The fat heads are the progeny of magazine editors and art critics, who have usurped completely the place that these used to hold before art and literature were commercialized. There was an abandoned swinging lack of intelligence about the music that communicated itself to the dancers, who seemed wrapped in their parts to the exclusion of their other personalities, if they had any. It well fitted the days succeeding those when the greatest artists of the country gave themselves over to commercialism—when Jessie Wilcox Smith was doing advertisement for a boiler factory and Jules Guerin was in by Gimbel Brothers.

It would be a shame to close without mentioning the others that took part in giving them such publicity as we do. Some of them don't need it, to be sure, their names being household words, but the works of others are not yet as common as the backwoods chromo or the ubiquitous kitchen oilcloth, and we should like to assist them all. The most famous of the bunch who took part in the performance were Edward M. Ashe, Willard Fairchild, Lejaren A. Hiller, Martin Justice, C. Allan Gilbert, Gordon Grant, Howard Heath, R. M. Brinkerhoff, C. D. Williams, George Kerr, Jack Bryant, Will Foster, David Robinson, Charles Voight, Foster, David Robinson, Charles Voight, Harry Grant Dart and Harvey Dunn.



C. ALLAN GILBERT'S SKETCH OF HIMSELF AS "PALL MALL MECCA"